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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An online auction system for enabling bidding over a computer network by remotely located bidders utilizing computing devices for receiving information to be provided to a bidder and transmitting bid information of the bidder, comprising:

one or more servers configured to provide an auction service having 1) a preliminary bidding component conducted over the computer network, the preliminary bidding component offering for auction a plurality of items, each item being offered for a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration of time, the preliminary bidding component resulting in a final preliminary bid for each of the plurality of items; and 2) a dynamic real-time auction component conducted over the computer network, beginning after closing of the preliminary bidding component upon expiration of the ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration of time, the dynamic auction component offering for auction each of the plurality of items from the preliminary auction component, the dynamic auction component defining a starting bid for each of the plurality of items in the dynamic auction component based on the respective final preliminary bid from the preliminary bidding component, the dynamic auction component being configured to receive dynamic bids over the computer network and to apply the dynamic bids in real time.

2. (Canceled)

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3. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein proxy bids are accepted during the preliminary auction component.

4. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 3 wherein a proxy bidder's current bid is automatically increased by a minimum increment in response to a higher bid, the minimum increment continuing until no further higher bids are forthcoming or until a maximum proxy bid has been reached.

5. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 further comprising a countdown timer displayed on a screen of each of the remotely located bidders during the dynamic auction component, the countdown timer being used to inform each of the remotely located bidders of a running time remaining until one of the plurality of items can no longer be bid on.

6. (Original) The system of claim 5 wherein the countdown timer resets in response to a bid being input.

7. (Original) The system of claim 1 further comprising a means for alerting bidders during the dynamic auction component that a specific item of interest is nearly ready to be offered for auction.

8. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an audible alarm transmitted through the computer network.

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9. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders comprises a communication external to the computer network.

10. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an instant message.

11. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 9 wherein the communication is one of a telephone call and a pager alert.

12. (Original) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an electronic mail message transmitted to bidders.

13. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein bids in excess of a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established bid increment are treated as proxy bids.

14. (Original) The system of claim 3 wherein proxy bids by the high bidder during the preliminary bidding component are carried over to the dynamic auction component.

15. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting an auction over a computer network comprising:

offering over the network a preliminary bidding on a plurality of items offered for auction, each item being offered for a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established time period;

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accepting preliminary bids resulting in a final preliminary bid for each of the plurality of items;

closing the preliminary bidding upon expiration of said ~~preestablished~~ pre-established time period;

offering over the network dynamic real-time bidding for each of the plurality of items from the preliminary bidding after said closing of the preliminary bidding; ~~and~~

defining a starting bid for each of the plurality of items in the dynamic real-time bidding based on the respective final preliminary bid from the preliminary bidding;

receiving at least one dynamic bid over the computer network during the dynamic real-time bidding; and

applying the at least one dynamic bid in real time.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising accepting proxy bids during the preliminary bidding.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 further comprising automatically increasing a proxy bidder's current bid by a minimum amount in response to a higher bid, said automatic bid increasing continuing until no further higher bids are forthcoming or until a maximum proxy bid has been achieved.

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19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising displaying a countdown timer on a screen of each remotely located bidder during the dynamic bidding, the countdown timer informing each bidder of a time remaining until one of the plurality of items can no longer be bid on.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19 further comprising resetting the countdown timer in response to each dynamic bid.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising alerting bidders prior to the dynamic real-time bidding of one or more of the plurality of items.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said alerting bidders includes the step of generating an audible signal through the network.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said alerting bidders includes the step of generating a communication external to the network.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said alerting bidders includes the step of generating an instant message through the network.

25. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 23 wherein the communication is one of a telephone call and a pager alert.

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26. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21 wherein said alerting bidders includes transmitting an electronic mail message to the bidders.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15 further comprising treating the preliminary bids having values in excess of a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established bid increment as proxy bids.

28. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17 further comprising carrying over the proxy bids accepted during the preliminary bidding to the dynamic real-time bidding.

29. (Currently Amended) A method for conducting an auction over a computer network comprising:

conducting a first auction portion

offering a plurality of items for auction, each item being offered for a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration,

a first auction portion communication over the network causing a display of a first auction portion status, including a final first auction portion high bid for each of the plurality of items;

closing the first auction portion upon expiration of the ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration; and

conducting a second real-time virtual auction portion over the computer network after said closing of the first auction portion, the second real-time virtual auction portion

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offering for auction over the computer network the plurality of items from the first auction portion, ~~and~~

defining a starting bid for each of the plurality of items in the second auction portion based on the respective final first auction portion high bid from the first auction portion, receiving at least one dynamic bid over the computer network, and
applying the at least one dynamic bid in real time,

a second auction portion communication over the network causing a display of a second auction portion status, including, for a particular one of the plurality of items, a current high bid and a second auction portion countdown timer showing a running time until the current high bid will be deemed a winning bid unless a more favorable bid is received.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising alerting interested users during the second auction portion that one of the plurality of items is close to being offered for bid.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 wherein the second auction portion countdown timer resets in response to an input bid.

33. (Currently Amended) An online auction system for enabling bidding over a computer network by remotely located bidders utilizing computing devices for receiving

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information to be provided to a bidder and transmitting bid information of the bidder, comprising:

one or more servers configured to provide an auction service having 1) a preliminary bidding component conducted over the computer network, the preliminary bidding component offering for auction at least one item, the item being offered for a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration of time, the preliminary bidding component resulting in a final preliminary bid; and 2) a dynamic real-time auction component conducted over the computer network, beginning after closing of the preliminary bidding component upon expiration of the ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration of time, the dynamic auction component offering for auction the at least one item from the preliminary auction component, the dynamic auction component defining a starting bid for the item in the dynamic auction component based on the final preliminary bid from the preliminary bidding component, the dynamic auction component being configured to receive dynamic bids over the computer network and to apply the dynamic bids in real time.

34. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component is commenced in an operator-definable time after the closing of the preliminary bidding component.

35. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the closing of the preliminary bidding component prevents acceptance of additional bids until the dynamic real-time auction component is commenced, the dynamic real-time auction component being commenced in a predefined time after the closing of the preliminary bidding component.

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36. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the preliminary bidding component is prevented from resulting in a sale.

37. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component is required to be conducted to determine a final successful bid for each of the plurality of items.

38. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component is conducted regardless of an outcome of the preliminary bidding component.

39. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the preliminary bidding component provides a first bidding format, and the dynamic real-time auction component provides a different bidding format.

40. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the preliminary bidding component offers the plurality of items for bid simultaneously, and the dynamic real-time auction component offers the plurality of items for bid individually and consecutively.

41. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time component is configured to decrease an amount of time allotted between dynamic bids as the total number of dynamic bids received increases.

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42. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time component is configured to provide, for each of the plurality of items, a matrix of selectable bid amounts for selection by a user.

43. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 42 wherein the selectable bid amounts are based on the respective final preliminary bid from the preliminary bidding component.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding is commenced in an operator-definable time after said closing of the preliminary bidding.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein said closing of the preliminary bidding prevents acceptance of additional bids until said offering of the dynamic real-time bidding, the dynamic real-time bidding being offered in a predefined time after said closing of the preliminary bidding.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising preventing the preliminary bidding from resulting in a sale.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising requiring said offering of the dynamic real-time bidding to be performed to determine a final successful bid for each of the plurality of items.

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48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising performing said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding regardless of an outcome of the preliminary bidding.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein said step of offering the preliminary bidding includes providing a first bidding format, and said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding includes providing a different bidding format.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein said step of offering the preliminary bidding includes offering the plurality of items for bid simultaneously, and said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding includes offering the plurality of items for bid individually and consecutively.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising decreasing an amount of time allotted between dynamic bids as the total number of dynamic bids received increases.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising providing, for each of the plurality of items, a matrix of selectable bid amounts for selection by a user.

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53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 52 further comprising determining the selectable bid amounts based on the respective final preliminary bid from the preliminary bidding.

54. (Currently Amended) An online system for enabling sales over a computer network to remotely located purchasers who are utilizing computing devices for receiving information regarding a sale and transmitting bid information to the system, comprising:

one or more servers configured to provide 1) a preliminary bidding component conducted over the computer network, the preliminary bidding component offering for sale at least one item, the item being offered for a ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration of time, the preliminary bidding component resulting in a final preliminary bid; and 2) a dynamic real-time bidding component conducted over the computer network, the dynamic real-time bidding component beginning after closing of the preliminary bidding component upon expiration of the ~~preestablished~~ pre-established duration of time, the dynamic real-time bidding component offering for sale the at least one item from the preliminary bidding component, the dynamic real-time bidding component defining a starting bid for the item in the dynamic real-time bidding component based on the final preliminary bid from the preliminary bidding component, the dynamic auction component being configured to receive dynamic bids over the computer network and to apply the dynamic bids in real time.

55. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the final preliminary bid for a particular one of the plurality of items is determined to be a winning bid for the particular item

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unless a dynamic bid higher than the final preliminary bid is received over the computer network during the dynamic real-time auction component.

56. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic auction component is configured to accept dynamic bids over the computer network for a particular one of the plurality of items until a dynamic bid higher than a current high bid for the particular item is not received within a predefined period of time.

57. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic auction component is configured to accept over the computer network, for each of the plurality of items, a dynamic bid greater than the final preliminary bid received for the respective item during the preliminary bidding component.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15 further comprising determining the final preliminary bid for a particular one of the plurality of items to be a winning bid for the particular item unless a dynamic bid higher than the final preliminary bid is received over the computer network during the dynamic real-time bidding.

59. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15 further comprising accepting dynamic bids over the computer network for a particular one of the plurality of items until a dynamic bid higher than a current high bid for the particular item is not received within a predefined period of time.

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60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising:
determining, for each of the plurality of items, whether there is at least one dynamic bid received during the dynamic real-time bidding that is greater than the final preliminary bid; and
identifying, for each of the plurality of items, a final successful bid as one of the final preliminary bid and the at least one dynamic bid.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising identifying, for each of the plurality of items, a final successful bid as being one of the final first auction portion high bid and a second auction portion bid for the respective item.

62. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic auction component is configured to treat the dynamic bids as straight, non-proxy bids.

63. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic auction component is configured to apply the dynamic bids received over the computer network against one another.

64. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component does not include a live in-person auction.

65. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the one or more servers is configured to act as an auctioneer in the dynamic real-time auction component, the dynamic real-time auction component being configured to operate without a human auctioneer.

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66. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising treating the dynamic bids as straight, non-proxy bids.

67. (New) The method of claim 15 wherein the at least one dynamic bid includes a plurality of dynamic bids received over the computer network, said applying including applying the plurality of dynamic bids against one another.

68. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising at least one server controlling the dynamic real-time bidding without using a human auctioneer.

69. (New) The method of claim 15 further comprising displaying over the computer network a geographic location of at least one bidder associated with the at least one dynamic bid.